



February 9, 2017

To the esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing you about the Governor's proposed budget 2018-19.

We take issue with the proposed allocation of the \$5 fee assessed at license renewal from HAVEN to the General Fund, and the suggested amendment to repeal mandated reporting of a licensed health care provider's impairment and need for mental health or substance abuse treatment in the Governor's proposed budget for 2018-19.

In 2015, Public Act 15-244 increased the license renewal fee by \$5 in order to provide funding for a professional assistance program, namely the Health Assistance Intervention Education Network (HAVEN) to "provide confidential consultation and support to healthcare professionals facing health concerns related to alcoholism, substance abuse, behavioral or mental health issues and/or physical illness (haven-ct.org)."

PA 15-244 also mandated reporting of impaired health care professionals to ensure patient safety and appropriate care for the health professional.

HAVEN was created as a completely unfunded program in 2006 by Connecticut's professional health care organizations. The founding organizations agreed to a \$5 increase in professional licensure fees if it was earmarked for HAVEN. To date HAVEN has not received a dollar of support, while the state has received approximately \$800,000.

Last year alone, HAVEN has provided services for over 400 health care professionals with substance abuse problems, and this number is not expected to change. Testimonials from various health care professionals, many of them physicians and nurses, support the importance of continuing counseling and support of impaired health care providers. The budget proposal erroneously states that the Department of Health (DPH) reported an increase in work load due to the mandated reporting. DPH does not provide substance abuse treatment for impaired health care professionals and a possible increase in administrative workload (and cost, which is likely a much lower amount than collected) related to mandated reporting does not justify withholding the funds. It is misleading to ask us to pay \$5 more during mandatory annual license renewal for an important professional service and not allocate the funds as expected. Furthermore, current statute does not allow for the recall of funds that have been allocated for a specific reason.

We believe that mandated reporting of an impaired health care professional is vital to the safety of our patients, as it is to the wellbeing of our professional healthcare workforce, and repealing this mandate is dangerous and unethical.

During a time of increased efforts to address the state's substance addiction problem, it is unfathomable why support and treatment for health care providers, who are the forefront of fighting this battle are left on their own unsupported and untreated. Wouldn't you want to know that the professional whom you trust at a vulnerable time with the health and wellbeing of your loved ones, is not extremely vulnerable themselves?

We urge you to ensure funding to HAVEN as required by law since 2015 and remove language repealing mandated reporting of an impaired health care provider.

Sincerely,

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